



2026

CAT REPORT

Insights from the 2025
National Pet Owners Survey

APPA
American Pet Products Association

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Background and Purpose

The American Pet Products Association (APPA) was established to promote pet ownership and advance the pet products industry.

Our Aim

- Gather pet industry professionals at engaging and educational events
- Inform our members and industry stakeholders through trusted research insights
- Connect pet businesses and professionals through networking, branding and marketing opportunities
- Empower our members to more effectively deliver products that keep pets happy and healthy

Our Research

- Monitors consumer habits (pet ownership, purchase behavior, etc.)
- Demonstrates short- and long-term trends
- Identifies new opportunities in pet ownership, pet product innovation, and service consumption
- Incorporates contextual data from trusted sources for a clear picture of the industry outlook

Sample & Method

APPA partnered with nationally recognized organizations to conduct the 2025 National Pet Owners Survey (NPOS). Invitations to the online survey were sent to a nationally representative sample.

The screener sample was balanced using current U.S. Census targets for gender, age, region, race/ethnicity, income and household size to assess current pet ownership in the U.S.

Respondent Qualifications

Screener Respondents

Age 18 or older, nationally represented to current U.S. Census statistics.

Questionnaire Respondents

Must own a pet from one of the following categories

- Dogs
- Cats
- Saltwater Fish
- Freshwater Fish
- Reptiles
- Birds
- Small Animals
- Horses

Method

The National Pet Owners Survey is conducted in two parts - a screener and a detailed pet owner module (questionnaire). There are eight different modules (questionnaires), each corresponding to a different type of pet - dog, cat, bird, small animal, reptile, freshwater fish, saltwater fish and horse. Upon completing the screener, if the respondent has a pet, they are selected for one of the eight follow-up modules to complete it based on the type of pet they own.

A total of 9,221 completed pet owner surveys are included in the data set. The table shows the number of completed surveys for each pet type. To maintain trended data, considerable effort was made to ensure the questionnaire maintained consistency. Details on the margin of error are in the Appendix. ■



STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

The U.S. pet market continues to show resilience and momentum. Pet industry expenditures reached \$158 billion in 2025 (+3.7%), with \$165 projected in 2026. Accelerating performance in 2025 was largely driven by online channels, with sequential improvement throughout the year. 2026 is off to a strong start, with full-year growth projected near 4.4%, of which roughly 2% is driven by inflation¹.

In 2025, U.S. pet ownership remained stable, with 95 million U.S. households owning at least one pet². The state of the pet industry in 2026 revealed multi-generational shifts among pet owners, expanding dog and cat ownership, a strengthening human-animal bond, and influencer-led product discovery and purchasing decisions are all shaping where the industry goes next.

\$158

**billion spent on
pets in 2025**

\$165

**billion projected
spend in 2026**

Figure 1A



Introduction

Cat ownership continues to be a growth engine in the U.S. pet market, fueled by both strong momentum and a broader cultural shift in how cats are perceived and embraced as pets. While still remaining the second most popular pet type in the U.S., cats are increasingly being recognized as highly compatible companions for a wide range of households and lifestyles, helping broaden their appeal among pet owners. That growing mainstream acceptance has been

reflected in ownership gains over the past two years: 2024 saw record-breaking growth, with a 23% year-over-year increase in cat-owning households, and in 2025, cat ownership continued to rise, up 5% year over year. Owners are also increasingly spending on their cats. In 2025, cat food and treat sales totaled \$18.4 billion, an 11% increase from 2024³. Together, these trends point to a category that is not only expanding in size but also strengthening its cultural relevance, as more consumers actively choose cats as a central part of modern pet ownership.

Cat Ownership as a Percentage of U.S. Households

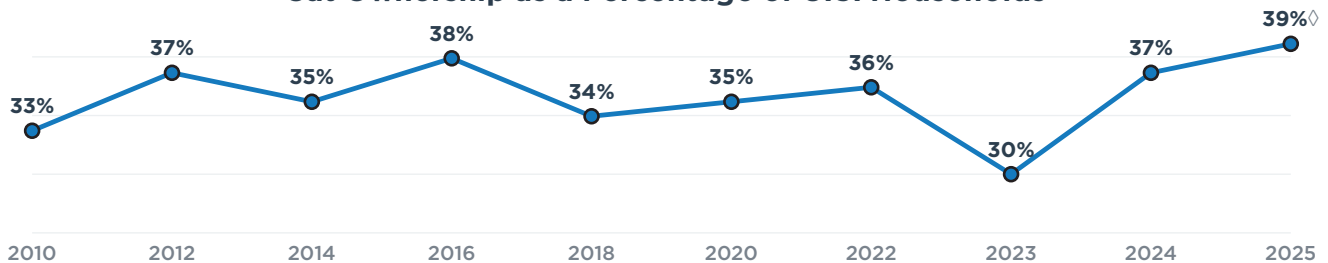


Figure 1B

Estimated Number of U.S. HH that Own a Cat (Millions)

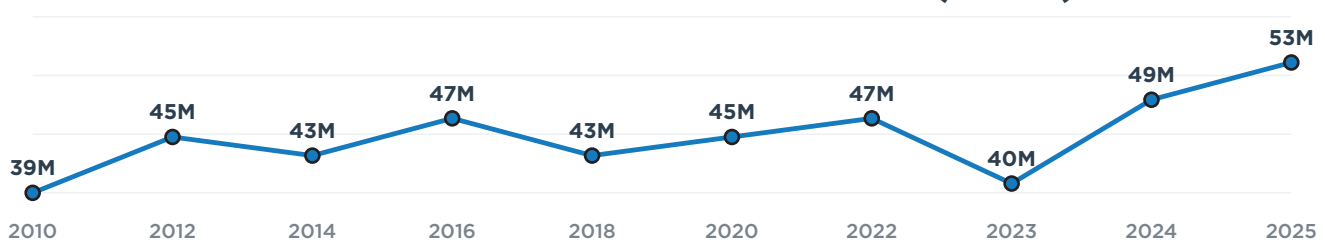


Figure 1C

To understand where the cat category is headed, it is first important to level set on the broader trends shaping cat ownership overall. However, within the cat ownership base, two groups stand out as especially distinct in the trends shaping the category: Gen Z and male cat owners, or “cat dads.” As cat ownership continues to expand across the broader market, these audiences are showing some of the clearest signs of where the category

is headed, from shifting purchase behaviors to changing attitudes around care, bonding, and lifestyle fit. Their outsized influence makes them not just notable segments but key indicators of the broader consumer shifts reshaping cat ownership today. The trends that follow first outline the overarching direction of the cat category, then take a closer look at what sets these two groups apart and the role they play in defining what comes next.

◇Statistically significant from 2024

Cat ownership continues to rise, up 5% in 2025.

Figure 1C-1

Multi-Cat Households

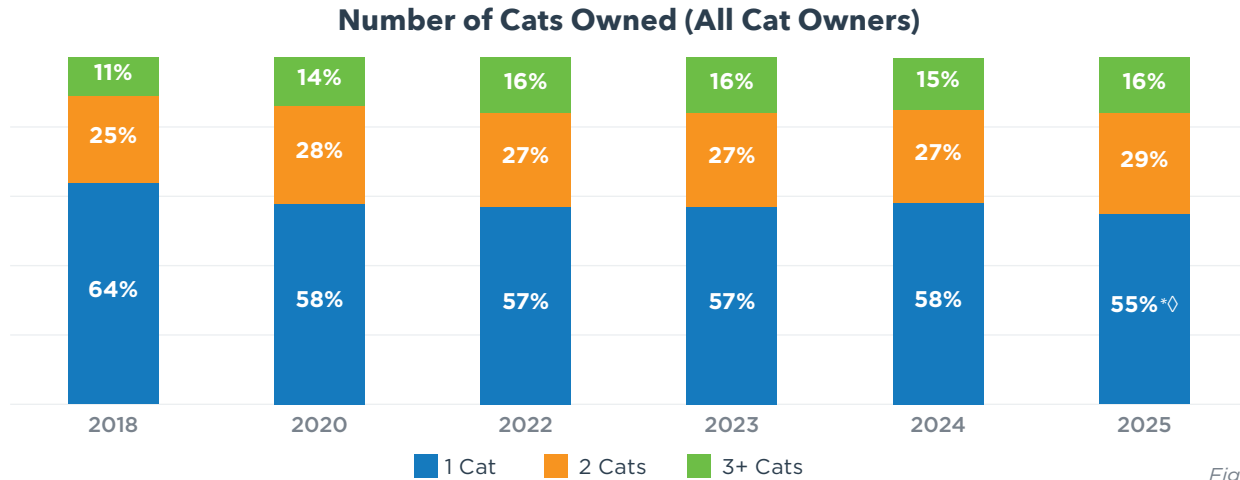


Figure 4C

Number of Cats Owned (By Generation)

Gen Z						
	2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Cat	-	57%	60%	58%	58%	55%
2 Cats	-	28%	26%	26%	28%	28%
3+ Cats	-	15%	14%	16%	14%	16%

Millennial						
	2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Cat	69%	62%	63%	58%	60%	57%*
2 Cats	25%	27%	24%	27%	28%	29%
3+ Cats	6%	11%	13%	15%	13%	13%*

Gen X						
	2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Cat	64%	55%	52%	55%	55%	52%*
2 Cats	24%	29%	29%	28%	28%	29%
3+ Cats	12%	16%	19%	17%	17%	19%

Boomer						
	2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Cat	64%	57%	54%	55%	57%	52%*
2 Cats	24%	27%	28%	27%	25%	30%◇
3+ Cats	12%	16%	18%	17%	18%	17%

Figure 4D

Number of Cats Owned (By Gender)

Women						
	2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Cat	60%	54%	53%	54%	55%	50%
2 Cats	27%	29%	29%	28%	28%	31%
3+ Cats	13%	17%	18%	18%	17%	19%

Men						
	2018	2020	2022	2023	2024	2025
1 Cat	72%	63%	62%	61%	60%	61%
2 Cats	22%	26%	25%	26%	26%	27%
3+ Cats	6%	11%	13%	14%	13%	13%

Figure 4E

*Statistically significant from 2018 | ◇Statistically significant from 2024

*◇Statistically significant from 2018 & 2024

Demographics

Cat ownership is evolving across generations and demographics, signaling a broader reshaping of the consumer base driving the category's growth. While Millennials continue to represent the largest share of cat owners (31%), ownership is gaining momentum among both younger and older cohorts, with a 10% increase in Gen Z and 8% increase among Gen X cat owners year-over-year in 2025. At the same time, Boomer cat ownership decreased 13% year-over-year, pointing to a generational handoff as Gen Z deepens its presence in the market.

While cultural visibility of the "cat dad" continues to grow, reflecting a broader mainstreaming of cat ownership across identities and lifestyles, women still remain a key force behind category expansion: While cat ownership among men has stabilized, the number of women cat owners increased by 8%. Together, these shifts suggest that cat ownership is becoming increasingly concentrated among younger and middle-aged consumers, with women continuing to play a leading role as cat owners

Cat Owners by Generation

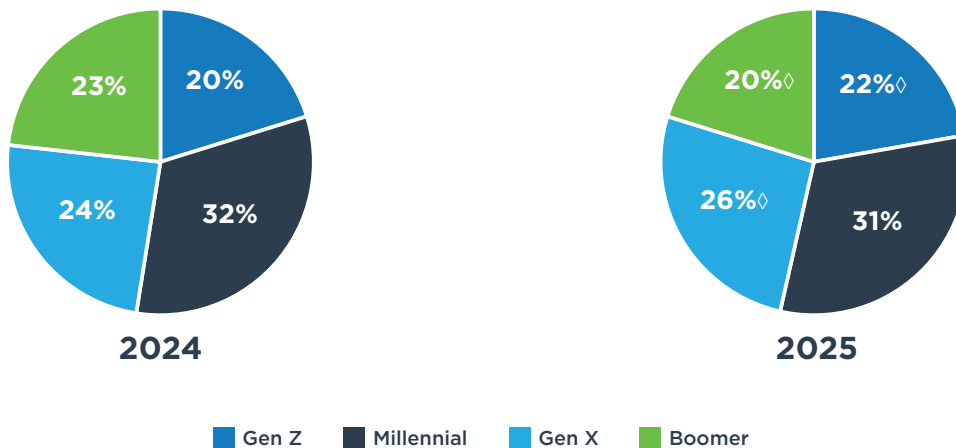


Figure 4F





More Information



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